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ABSTRACT

This document consists of four issues of a newsletter for educators at the elementary level. Each issue features articles on a specific theme along with regular columns. The Fall 1999 issue focuses on the role of autonomy in the elementary classroom using the constructivist approach. A second article presents fire and Halloween safety tips. The executive board vice president's column discusses meeting middle grade students' needs with opportunities. The Winter 1999 issue concerns creating an author's notebook to help students become better writers. A second article discusses Web sites for educators, students, and parents. The vice president's column addresses volunteerism. The Spring 2000 issue focuses on multicultural education, with the feature article addressing common misconceptions. The vice president's column discusses raising reading expectations. The Summer 2000 issue deals with ways to reduce students' age bias through literature and learning experiences. The vice president's column discusses the use of museum exhibits as a model for student engagement. Some newsletter issues include listings of new Web resources. (KB)

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Focus on Elementary Ages 7-10: A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community, 1999-2000.

Patricia Crawford, Editor

Volume 12, Numbers 1-4

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ACEI

Fall 1999 • Vol. 12, No. 1

Focus on Elementary ages 7-10

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

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Are You Receiving the Right Focus Newsletter?

In addition to *Focus on Elementary*, ACEI offers the following Professional Focus newsletters:

Focus on Infants & Toddlers (ages 0-3)

Focus on Pre-K & K (ages 4-6)

Focus on Middle School (ages 11-13)

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The Role of Autonomy in the Elementary Classroom

Lynn Kirkland, Assistant Professor of Education, University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Jerry Aldridge, Professor of Education, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Although there have been many discussions about constructivism during the past 20 years, misconceptions still abound. This article will attempt to clarify some of these misconceptions by addressing the following questions:

What is a constructivist classroom?
Who is a constructivist teacher?
What do children do in constructivist classrooms?
What is autonomy?
Why are some children more autonomous than others?

What Is a Constructivist Classroom?

Constructivist classroom communities strive to promote children's cognitive, moral, and social development. These classrooms foster critical thinking and problem solving, rather than drill and recitation. Children are encouraged to make choices and decisions, and are given time for experimentation (DeVries & Zan, 1994).

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Who Is a Constructivist Teacher?

The constructivist teacher works to develop reciprocal relationships with the children in the classroom, thus facilitating an atmosphere of understanding, fairness, and negotiation. For example, the children create and implement classroom rules that emphasize logical consequences rather than punishment. If a child makes a mess in the art center, then that child is responsible for cleaning up the mess.

What Do Children Do in a Constructivist Classroom?

Children in constructivist classrooms actively participate in the construction of knowledge. By fostering children's autonomy, teachers promote independence and self-governance. By minimizing adult authority, and giving children a voice in establishing the curriculum, environment, and rules of the classroom, teachers help children develop their ability to make decisions.

This process begins on the first day of school, when children participate in the creation of the classroom environment, provide ideas for curricular topics, and co-author rules for classroom management. Such participation in conceiving the classroom community helps children establish their place in the democratic process (Kohn, 1996). For example, children's ideas about topics they will study during the school year can be written on a chart tablet and used by the teacher when curricular decisions need to be made. Children might vote to decide on classroom "jobs," such as zookeeper, meteorologist, gardener, etc.

By minimizing adult authority, and giving children a voice in establishing the curriculum, environment, and rules of the classroom, teachers help children develop their ability to make decisions.

What Is Autonomy?

Piaget (1948/1973) described autonomy as the ultimate aim of education. In Piagetian theory,

> autonomy means the ability to think for oneself and to decide between right and wrong in the moral realm, and between truth and untruth in the intellectual realm, by taking relevant factors into account, independently of reward and punishment. (Kamii, 1992, p. 9)

Why Are Some Children More Autonomous Than Others?

Principles of teaching that directly relate to the develop-

continued on page 4 . . .

Fire and Halloween Safety Tips From the National SAFE KIDS Campaign

In observance of National Fire Prevention Week 1999 (October 3-9) and Halloween, the National SAFE KIDS Campaign has compiled tips to help families avoid injuries.

Strike Away Fire!

Many people think a fire won't happen to them, but it can. Fire is fast, and deadly smoke fumes alone can kill. That's why it is crucial for families to plan an escape route and take the necessary steps to prevent them. According to Heather Paul, Executive Director of National SAFE KIDS Campaign, "Children are especially at risk because they don't understand the danger of fire and may not know how to react quickly."

Despite a dramatic 43 percent decline in the fire death rate since the Campaign's inception, fires and burns remain the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children in the United States.

This year's National Fire Prevention Week theme is *Fire Drills: The Great Escape!* The Campaign recommends that educators and parents teach children the following fire safety tips:

- Plan and practice two escape routes out of the house and each room.
- Avoid plugging several appliance cords into the same electrical socket.
- Recognize the sound of a smoke alarm
- Crawl low under smoke
- Cover your mouth and nose when escaping a burning building.

- Touch doors before opening them.
- Never go back into a burning building.

The Campaign also recommends taking children to your local fire station for a tour. Children will be able to see a firefighter in full firefighting gear and learn that he or she is someone who puts out fires and saves children.

Fires can frighten even the most prepared. By thoroughly learning and practicing basic fire safety, a family will have a better chance at staying alive.

Keeping the Treat in Children's Halloween

Halloween is coming, and kids are thinking about their costumes and the piles of candy coming their way. But they are not thinking about the many dangers they will face during the frantic trick-or-treating festivities. Heather Paul says, "Most parents worry about candy tampering. They are not aware that pedestrian injuries, burns, and falls account for the majority of injuries on Halloween." To help make sure your child's Halloween is safe, the National SAFE KIDS Campaign recommends taking the following precautions:

- Accompany children under age 12 on their trick-or-treating rounds.
- Attach the name, address, and phone number of children under 12 to their clothes in case they get separated from adults.

continued on page 6 . . .

. . . *continued from page 2*

ment of autonomy can be examined through three different relationships—children and adults, children and peers, and children and learning (Kamii & DeVries, 1980).

In the first relationship, between children and adults, adult authority is minimized as much as possible. An atmosphere is developed that allows the adult and child to exchange points of view in a non-threatening environment. If children are given opportunities to negotiate, they build on this ability.

The use of choice is an indicator that the relationship between a teacher and child is becoming autonomous. Kohn (1993) asserted that children who are allowed to make decisions are more engaged in their learning. He encouraged the use of experiences, which build decision-making skills and the inclination to use them. Setting up the classroom environment in a collaborative fashion with the children can offer them more choices about their schooling. Teachers also can give children choices in terms of the selection, production, and implementation of curriculum.

Relinquishing the use of rewards and punishment requires teachers to acknowledge, and reconsider, their use of power (Kohn, 1993). When controlling children through the use of rewards and punishment, there is no opportunity for children to make decisions based on their own thinking.

Relationships between children and their peers also can foster autonomy. When children exchange points of view with their classmates, they begin to coordinate points of view. As children take into account other children's ideas, they are more able to clarify their own. When children are unable to work out equitable solutions for conflicting ideas, the constructivist teacher can encourage children, through effective questioning, to consider and clarify alternative soluttions (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

Finally, children's relationships to learning also can facilitate their development of autonomy. According to constructivist theory, children who are encouraged to think for themselves develop an intrinsic motivation for learning. Constructivist teachers do not believe that children "discover" all types of knowledge on their own. Although Piaget's theory does encourage children to be mentally active, he makes a clear distinction between discovery and invention. Rules of a game are an example of this distinction. Young children are unable to "discover" the rules of a game, but they can "invent" rules once a teacher has intro-

Relationships between children and their peers also can foster autonomy. When children exchange points of view with their classmates, they begin to coordinate points of view.

duced them to the game and stated its specific rules.

Seefeldt and Barbour (1990) describe techniques that teachers can use to encourage autonomy in children:

- Have a clear understanding of who will be making decisions in the classroom
- Take into consideration individual children's needs
- Plan wisely for routines and smooth transitions in the classroom, to help avoid possible confrontations
- Allow children an opportunity to solve a problem that arises in the classroom, and intervene only when necessary
- Know the emotional and social needs of the children well enough to make informed decisions about if, and when, it is necessary to intervene
- Vary groupings during the school day, so that children develop increasingly complex social abilities to cooperate and participate within a group.

Some cultures and families view interdependence, rather than autonomy, as a more appropriate way to interact with children (Delpit, 1995; Hsue & Aldridge, 1995; Williams, 1994). However, the goals of autonomy and interdependence do not have to be mutually exclusive. These roles can complement, rather than conflict, with each other. Interdependence and group membership can be promoted through classroom experiences such as work committees, small-group work, and class meetings. A balance of experiences fostering both autonomy and interdependence in children can promote continuity between the home and school.

The role of autonomy in the classroom is multifaceted. As we enter the 21st century, we encourage teachers to critically examine the importance placed on autonomy in diverse classrooms, in order that they may work toward achieving equitable and effective learning environments.

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- Instruct children never to enter a home or apartment building unless accompanied by an adult.
- Restrict trick-or-treating visits to homes with porch or outside lights illuminated.
- Tell children to bring their treats home before eating them.
- Use face paint or cosmetics instead of masks.
- Give trick-or-treaters flashlights.
- Make costumes short enough to avoid tripping.
- Secure hats so they will not slip over children's eyes.
- Allow children to carry only flexible knives, swords or other props.
- Teach children not to cut across yards.
- Use costumes that are light-colored enough to make children visible at night and that are flame resistant.
- Remind children to stop at all street corners before crossing, to look left right and left again before crossing, and to walk and not run while trick-or-treating.
- Teach them never to dart out into a street or cross between parked cars.
- Avoid coustumes made of flimsy material and outfits with big, baggy sleeves or billowing skirts.
- Keep candles, pumpkins with candles, matches and lighters out of children's reach.

This year, the Campaign is partnering with Nestle Chocolate & Confections to disseminate important pedestrian safety messages to children this fall. In addition to a Halloween safety checklist to be distributed by the Campaign's more than 260 state and local SAFE KIDS coalitions, over 34 million bags of Nestle chocolate will include free reflective stickers, as well as special safety tips for children. For a free Halloween safety checklist, write the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004. For more information or helpful safety tips, visit the Campaign's Web site at www.safekids.org.

web sites for educators

www.homeworkcentral.com
Parents and teachers of special learners are encouraged to visit, via the Internet, the Learning Disability Resource, a special section of Homework Central. The site offers free access from one location to over 10,000 Web pages dedicated to learning and physical disability issues and resources. In addition, the site hosts a moderated chat room for parents and teachers. Future additions will include an Assistive Technology section, with liks to sites aimed at Web developers on topics such as making Web sites more accessible to the differently abled.

www.pfizerfunzone.com
Students can create a chemical reaction, get up-close and personal with an ant, and build their own compass, all by logging on to Pfizer's interactive science Web site. The FunZone teaches science in a lively setting that appeals to children. The site's interactive games, experiments, and scientific information are designed to entertain and enlighten children and students 8 to 14 years old.

www.penguinclassics.com
The Penguin Group has launched a new Web site for general readers and educators. The site will feature online interviews, a discussion area, cutting-edge research, and original essays.

www.teachnet.org
TeachNet.org, a Web site created for and by teachers, has recently broadened its content to include over 6,000 pages of teacher-developed curricula for students in pre-K through 12th grade. The site also includes chat rooms, bulletin boards, ideas on how students can interact with their peers, and help for teachers creating their own Web sites.

From the Vice President

meeting middle grade students' needs with opportunities

These days, creating responsive and effective instruction for middle grade students is a challenging, yet critical, task. We must improve the educational experiences of students ages 10 to 14 in creative ways so that they will make a successful transition to high school and be able to achieve high standards.

These young adults have many and varied needs. Using research from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the National Middle School Association, and other groups, a Minneapolis Public Schools Middle Grades Task Force developed reform efforts designed to improve student achievement.

This column highlights part of the Minneapolis Public Schools Platform, focusing on needs of early adolescents as they relate to four types of developmental characteristics: intellectual, psychological, physical, and social/emotional.

INTELLECTUAL

Early adolescents need:

- *to explore and be challenged
- *time for structured peer group activities
- *high academic expectations and structure for success.

Educators can provide opportunities for:

- *active and interactive learning; in-depth, engaging projects
- *cooperative learning experiences that involve peer group work
- *instruction and curriculum that is relevant to their lives.

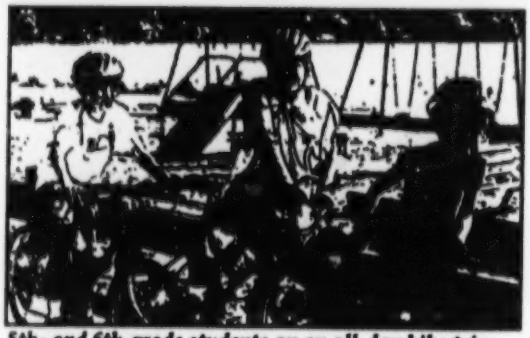
PSYCHOLOGICAL

Early adolescents need:

- *to belong to a group
- *to develop their own sense of self-worth
- *clear expectations and consequences.

Educators can provide opportunities for:

- *active learning activities, such as games, group discussions, field trips, role play, experimentation, and discovery
- *learning to cope with and help develop character, ethics, beliefs, values, perceptions, and interests
- *consistent, clear messages addressing the real-life needs of students.



5th- and 6th-grade students on an all-day bike trip.

PHYSICAL

Early adolescents need:

- *to engage in challenging physical activity
- *to be protected from embarrassment
- *information about their bodies and the impact of physical appearance on their lives.

Educators can provide opportunities for:

- *activities that permit and encourage physical movement, active interactions, and development
- *safe and structured guided experiences
- *nutrition, sex, and drug education.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

Early adolescents need:

- *frequent affirmation from adults
- *to talk and be listened to
- *to feel safe and in control of their lives.

Educators can provide opportunities for:

- *service learning, to develop a sense of responsibility
- *interactions with positive adult role models
- *learning consistency and coping skills, with a focus on how to make good choices and on appreciating diversity.

Although adolescence can be a turbulent time, the opportunities for learning are great. Barton Open is a K-8 central city school in Minneapolis, and our middle school students have opportunities to interact with elementary students, as well as with their peers. As educators, we can promote opportunities in and out of school that will promote the growth of our young people as scholars, good citizens, and increasingly competent, responsible young adults.

—M. J. Savaiano, Vice President
Representing Middle Childhood

Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Elementary* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the education and development of children ages 7 to 10. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered, please contact:

Patricia Crawford
University of Central Florida,
Box 2811
Daytona Beach, FL 32120

Focus on Elementary
Fall 1999, Volume 12, #1

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Focus on Elementary ages 7-10

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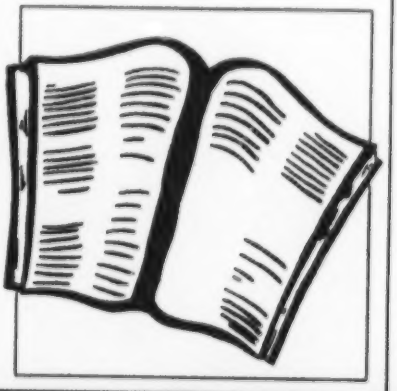
Creating an Author's Notebook

Ending Writing Welfare As We Know It

Sherron Killingsworth Roberts,
Visiting Assistant Professor,
University of Central Florida

How often do teachers hear this heartfelt cry "... but Teacher, I don't know what to write about!"? Donald Graves (1976, 1983) coined the phrase "writing welfare" to describe the way that some teachers attempt to help children become better writers. In the midst of the creative writing push of the '70s and early '80s, when many teachers fed their students catchy sentence starters or clever scenarios, Graves argued that teachers should avoid force-feeding topics to children. In his mind, this "writing welfare" could arrest students' development in finding their own voices. On the other hand, some teachers tell students right away that they will have to be in charge of their own writing topics. In this case, students not only complain,



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"I don't know what to write about," but they also use this initial roadblock as an excuse not to write at all.

Donald Murray advises writers who are stymied to "start by writing about something you know. . . . You can't write about nothing." (Murray, in Graves, 1983, p. 12). Another great author, Lucy Calkins (1991), suggests building a notebook of ideas, not only as a tool for writing, but also as a tool for living. Jean Little (1987, pp. 92-93) notes that by compiling these ideas drawn from your own life experiences, it is possible to see the cumulative effect and realize that "your thoughts, your noticings, your fleet of orange slices matter."

When we start to bring our students into alignment with authors' circles (as outlined by Harste, Woodard, & Burke, 1984), not only are students modeling themselves after real-life authors, but now they see the recursive process of brainstorming ideas, and of writing and rewriting and turning and twisting ideas inside and out.

When we start to bring our students into alignment with authors' circles, not only are students modeling themselves after real-life authors, but now they see the recursive process of brainstorming ideas, and of writing and rewriting and turning and twisting ideas inside and out.

The Author's Notebook

This article outlines the concept of an author's notebook (or idea bank); it is borrowed from many prolific writers for use in the elementary classroom. Writers of all ages could benefit. In order to end "writing welfare" as we know it and give credence and power to the voice of children, I suggest that teachers allow students to create these author's notebooks. To begin this way of creating and thinking like a real author, I show my students examples of various author's notebooks. I have one example that is kept in an old recipe file with index cards. I have another from a student that was collected in a layer book, with each layer representing a section. And I tell them about yet another example that was made using a HyperStudio stack, with links to each section.

Whatever format this compilation of ideas takes, the author's notebook should contain some of the following sections: character names, interesting places, problems to solve, quotations, overheard conversations, and any other headings one might find helpful.

continued on page 4 . . .

Check This Out!

Web Sites for Educators, Students, and Parents

www.weather.com

The Weather Channel® and its new Web site offer a unique, educational weather program that gives teachers and students online resources about weather phenomena, including hurricanes, heat, humidity, and severe winter weather events.

Within the Learn More section, weather.com features four curriculum programs designed to engage students in the science behind weather. These programs include "Look Up!," a cross-curricular approach that encourages students to observe the sky; "The Weather Classroom," which provides a comprehensive look at how weather works and explains the natural forces that we often take for granted; "On the Safe Side," which combines severe weather preparedness with regular curriculum; and "The Teachers Lounge," which can assist educators with researching for a topic, planning and activity, or supplementing other material.

For more information on The Weather Channel's school curriculum programs, click on www.weather.com/education/

www.gomath.com

Cubic Science, Inc. (CSI) has recently launched its new math Web site, "Go Math." The site provides free online math tutoring for students in grades K-12. Visitors to the site may also receive a free sketch pad to assist in using "Go Math" by completing a short online survey.

www.y2kidz.org

This Web site entices childen to envision their futures through zany activities—and empowers them to contribute to the site to keep it evolving. The aim of the American Cancer Society, the creators of the site, is to harness kids' brain power and creativity to develop programming that will help prevent tomorrow's cancers—by changing kids' behaviors today.

According to Beth Stevenson, Director of Youth Initiatives at the American Cancer Society, "Research shows that 60 percent of cancers are related to lifestyle habits formed early in life. It's important for us to ask the experts—the kids—about some hows and whys of building healthier lifestyles. By interacting with each other about issues that are important to them, we hope kids will learn, from each other, how to make good, healthy decisions."

Completely kid-oriented and kid-driven, Y2Kidz is a place to explore questions like "Why *do* kids think smoking is cool?" or "How would you get rid of the junk food in *your* house?" It is also a place to connect with other kids and communicate. The site offers monitored chats, suggestion boxes, and a multitude of opportunities for young voices to be heard.

www.navy.mil/homepages/thumbs/

Protecting Our Children in Cyberspace is a computer crime prevention initiative sponsored by the Computer Crime Investigation Group of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. This page offers online documents of interest to parents and teachers: *What Parents Should Know About Potential Misuse of the Internet, Heading Off Potential Computer Misuse By Your Children, Thumbs Plus Gets Thumbs Up From Parents,* and *Porn's New Enemy: Parents Seek and Destroy Smut With Free Software.*

. . . *continued from page 2*

Elementary students can follow in the footsteps of prolific authors by compiling ideas that will help them overcome the intimidation of facing a blank page or blank computer screen. After helping children in grades 3 to 8 in workshop settings to create their own author's notebooks, my suggestion would be to have a mini-lesson concerning the importance of each of the following headings and then to offer resources to students in a learning station format.

• Character Names Section

In my classes, we discuss the importance of giving characters names that suit the characteristics of that person or that highlight some character trait that we want the reader to be sure to find. I discuss the intrigue and implications of a character named Harlan Granger in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976), as well as the character of Salamanca Tree Hiddle in *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994). Those who have not read about these characters will still be able to venture a guess as to what sort of role they might play, what sort of people they are, and why the author would choose these intriguing names for their characters. After providing that rationale and motivation, the students have the opportunity to take their index cards, eMates, or layer books to a learning station that has resources to help them begin compiling a list of interesting names to use in their upcoming writing. The resources I have found most useful for allowing students to gather character names are various baby name books and old phone books. In fact, my own author's notebook contains a character name that I still would like to develop into a satirical piece called "The Reverend Pat Answers."

The resources I have found most useful for allowing students to gather character names are various baby name books and old phone books.

• Interesting Places Section

Sometimes, before students start to collect ideas for interesting places, it helps to have a mini-lesson on choosing between an integral setting versus a more universal setting. To inspire students to think of unusual places, I have sources in a related learning station such as travel magazines, maps (*Family Fun* magazine always has a section on traveling for children), related Internet sites, and a book called *Books on the Move* (Knorr & Espeland, 1997), which describes both interesting places for families as well as related children's books. Generally, students will record various interesting places that they can work into future writing. Students always are encouraged to add their own experiences and ideas to the mix. As I search for a new idea in a book or magazine, I often am drawn to a memory of a place that I had forgotten: houses and rooms and towns I have left behind. Children should be encouraged to document any and all ideas in their author's notebooks for later use.

• Problems To Solve Section

"Problems to solve" is such an important heading for authors that over the years I have found several ways to help students find their own ideas for this section. In many cases, I find that a week-long unit on the importance of incorporating conflict into writing will help. I generally start with identifying the conflict in well-known fairy or folktales or in popular picture books. Having made clear to my

students the need for conflict or a problem, I provide several very different ways for them to collect problems, including the following:

Comic strips. One fun way to collect problems is to provide comic strips for students to read. I have found that elementary students lose momentum when given whole pages of the comics or "funnies"; therefore, I cut them into individual comic strips in order to maintain the students' focus. Often, students will select several comics that present an interesting problem to solve, and they will simply glue or paste these comics onto their index cards or in their layer books. Sometimes students elaborate upon and extend the simple text of the selected comic, but many times I have been reminded of a similar problem in my own life about which I will later choose to write.

Want ads. Another great vehicle for generating ideas about problems to solve are the want ads. Students find this an interesting and motivating medium. I cut out many different want ads. The lost and found ads, in particular, will yield the most interesting problems. Students are instructed to read the lost and found ads, and then brainstorm possible scenarios that created the need for the advertisement. I remember reading an advertisement in our local newspaper that announced a sum of cash being found near our university. My students and I not only imagined the personality of the person who would place such an ad, but also brainstormed the unscrupulous folks who might try to answer the ad although they were not the rightful owners. We even had story ideas generated that described the possible scams that might come out of this scenario.

Writing prompts. In the creative writing movement of the '70s and '80s, many teachers gave students independent task cards that had a creative, sometimes wacky or "far-out," idea as a story starter. For example, a card might ask students to imagine and write about what it would be like to be transformed into the teacher. Even though these "writing prompts" are the very thing that started the whole "writing welfare" controversy, I have found that allowing students to sort through reams of old creative writing prompts can be very effective. In my mind, one of the most stimulating parts of being an author often is coming up with the "idea," whereas the actual writing process can be tedious or laborious. Invariably, students who sift through these crazy ideas (such as being a flea spying on a dog) generate—and own—a new writing idea!

• Quotations Section

In order to inspire students to use quotations or proverbs in their writing, or to influence their prewriting thoughts, I read portions of Madeline L'Engle's (1962) *A Wrinkle in Time*. Another great book that uses quotations is *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994). Remind students that even so-called clichés, such as "Never judge a man until you've walked two moons in his moccasins," can be absolutely memorable and effective in their writing. During the mini-lession, we discuss how these quotations emphasize the related themes of each book. I love showing students examples of how a good quote can link ideas, drive ideas, and drive home the book's central themes. Then, I make available in a learning station many different sources, such as the Internet sites of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* [http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/bartlett/] and the *Quotation Board* [use AOL keyword: TBR, which stands for The Book Report]; the *Scholastic Treasury of Quotations for Children* (Betz, 1998); *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* (Browns, 1961); and the series of books by Roger and McWilliams (1990, 1991, 1992), which have an abundance of stimulating and clever quotations on almost every page.

• Overheard Conversations Section

I have not decided what it is in my own personality that loves to eavesdrop on people, but, for better or worse, this "hobby" can produce a rich set of ideas for the budding writer. In my own author's notebook, I have documented for future reference many different scenarios—some funny or clever, and some poignant or intriguing. About eight years ago I overheard my college roommate asking her toddler son how many pieces of candy he wanted. Without blinking an eyelash, he emphatically told her "too many"!

On a recent occasion, I overheard a mother who, while introducing her son, mentioned his ADD diagnosis, as well as his subsequent retention in 1st grade. The son's smile faded as his mother introduced his siblings with much more evident

pride. I have these memorable conversations noted in my Overheard Conversations Section, and I know that I will incorporate them into my writing. Being totally observant and taking in their surroundings will allow students to breathe life into stale characters or indifferent situations. In a related station, students can bring in transcripts of overheard conversation upon which you can build a mini-lesson, as well as a subsequent small-group brainstorming and remembering session.

Conclusion

Perhaps all this information about creating an author's notebook or idea bank will inspire you or your students to find other headings or avenues for conquering "writing welfare." Some teachers find it useful to have sections that include mini-lessons attended, or to include sections listing spelling demons or transitional phrases. The idea is to make this author's notebook work for you. As teachers, we know we should end the practice of providing writing assignments that are artificial and disconnected from students' lives. Forcing students to write without providing support through an author's notebook or idea bank, however, seems equally unreasonable. Calkins notes that

> throughout the field of teaching writing, one educator after another has begun to advocate that students jot down things they notice and wonder about, their memories and ideas, their favorite words and responses to reading into a container of some sort. Donald Murray speaks of that container as a day book, Donald Graves as a journal, Betsy Byars as a bureau drawer, and my colleagues and I as a writer's notebook. . . . (Calkins, 1994, p. 24).

Supporting our students as they shape these "containers" will serve as an important means for ending "writing welfare."

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From the Vice President

planting seeds of volunteerism

Last spring, in a greenhouse on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota, students planted over 180 hanging baskets that eventually became a summer splash of color along the Nicollet Mall shopping area in downtown Minneapolis. Students also were involved in other plant beautification projects: planting on the state capitol grounds in St. Paul, beautifying an inner-city neighborhood, and planting flowers around Habitat for Humanity houses. Flower plugs were donated by local greenhouses and nurtured in school GrowLabs before they were planted.

This very special program is called Kids, Education, the Environment and You (KEEY), which was started by John Solberg, age 83, a retired insurance agent. The program has grown over the past eight years and now includes 40,000 students and their teachers in more than 80 schools. To read more about the KEEY program, point your Web browser to an archival article from the University of Minnesota student newspaper: http://www.daily.umn.edu/daily/1999/03/08/news/flower/.

In April, the KEEY program was selected as one of 25 1999 Minnesota Star Award recipients from the National Youth Leadership Council. The program was selected as an outstanding example of service and service-learning practice and was recognized at the Minnesota Service Recognition Day Celebration on April 14th on the campus of Concordia University in St. Paul.

My students and I attended the awards program sponsored by eight organizations, including the Minnesota Governor's Office. We shared information on preparation, planning, reflection, implementation, and evaluation of the program so that others could benefit from our experience. All of the 25 state projects were on display during the recognition celebration. Later that month, Attorney General Janet Reno visited the Twin Cities, and KEEY students passed out geraniums to the people attending a breakfast meeting where she spoke.

Service learning empowers youth to take an active role in their community, using strategies to develop academic skills, responsibility, and character, and to help them become involved citizens. Think about getting your students involved in community innovation and action.

— M. J. Savaiano, Vice President, Middle Childhood

Students in the KEEY program, Lue Vang (left) and Crystal Squires plant plugs in the greenhouse.

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15 Misconceptions About Multicultural Education

Jerry Aldridge, Coordinator, Early Childhood Programs, and Charles Calhoun, Assistant Dean for Urban Affairs, School of Education, University of Alabama at Birmingham; and Ricky Aman, Cal-Tex, Pekanbaru, Sumatra, Indonesia

The movement toward multicultural education has gained momentum over the past 20 years. Guidelines from professional organizations have been in place for some time. While many elementary educators support multicultural development and genuinely try to incorporate diverse cultural issues into the curriculum, some widespread misconceptions about what multicultural education is and how it should be implemented hinder the process. Specifically, at least 15 common misconceptions should be addressed:

1. People from the same nation or geographic region, or those who speak the same language, share a common culture. At least seven disctinct dialects and cultures can be found in the Southern United States alone (Cross & Aldridge, 1989). Most Latinos share a common language, but they cannot be considered as one ethnic group sharing a similar culture. Tremendous historical, racial, and cultural differences must be acknowledged (Banks & Banks, 1997). The cultures of Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Argentina are distinctly different from one

another, even though they share the same language. In Canada, the language (French Canadian) and culture vary dramatically from that of Alberta and other provinces.

Numerous similar examples in Asia can also be found. In Indonesia, for example, many people speak Bahasa Indonesian. The country is actually home to hundreds of different languages and dialects and numerous diverse cultures. One can find Sundanese, Bataks, Minang, Javanese, Balinese, Dayak, Toraja, and the many tribal languages and cultures of Irian Jaya. In Malaysia, there are Malays, Chinese, East Indians, and the tribal groups of Sarawak. To view regions or nations as if they were monocultural is erroneous, and it may inhibit students' construction of the fact that many parts contribute to the whole.

Black History Month is often the only time children study African American leaders or read literature written by Black authors. Maya Angelou once remarked that she will be glad when Black History Month is no longer necessary. When all Americans are sufficiently a part of our courses of study and daily instruction, there will be no need for Black History week or month.

2. ***Families from the same culture share the same values.*** This notion is especially false for nondominant cultures living in the United States. Lynch and Hanson (1998) reported at least four ways individuals and families from other countries "live out" their culture in the United States. These include "1) mainstreamers, 2) bicultural individuals, 3) culturally different individuals, and 4) culturally marginal individuals" (p. 19). In reality, a continuum of cultural identity exists and the entire range often can be found within the same family. For example, grandparents may maintain their original culture, while their grandchildren may be bicultural or mainstreamers.

3. ***Children's books about another culture are usually authentic.*** This is an especially common misconception. Teachers who want to share other cultures may unintentionally choose books that are racist or not representative of a particular group. Many of us can identify certain culturally inappropriate books, such as *The Story of Little Black Sambo* by Bannerman (1899), *The Five Chinese Brothers* by Bishop and Wiese (1939), or *The Seven Chinese Brothers* by Mahy (1990).

Others are more subtle. A book that is often recommended (see Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987) is *Tikki Tikki Tembo* (Mosel, 1968). The book does have a delightful repetitive pattern that many children enjoy. The text and illustrations, however, are inaccurate depictions of any Chinese. In the text, the first and most honored son had the grand long name of "Tikki tikki tembo-no sa rembo-chari bari ruchi-pip peri pembo." The message about Chinese names is less than flattering. People in the Southern United States would be appalled if parents in the People's Republic of China were reading stories to their children about Southerners who used to name their children long names such as Bubba Bubba Jimbo Kenny Ray Billy Bob.

The Council on Interracial Books for Children published *Guidelines for Selecting Bias-Free Textbooks and Storybooks* in 1980 (see Derman-Sparks, 1989). The guidelines suggest: 1) checking illustrations for stereotypes or tokenism, 2) checking the story line, 3) looking at the lifestyles (watching out for the "cute-natives-in-costumes" syndrome, for example), 4) weighing relationships between people, 5) noting the heroes, 6) considering the effect on a child's self-image, 7) considering the author's or illustrator's background, 8) examining the author's perspective, 9) watching for loaded words, and 10) checking the copyright date.

Other criteria are available to readers. For example, Rudine Sims Bishop (1993) has published guidelines in *Teaching Multicultural Literature in Grades K-8*.

4. Multicultural education just includes ethnic or racial issues. While ethnic and racial concerns are a large part of multicultural education, gender and socioeconomic diversity also are important. Children come from many types of homes, including those headed by lesbian or gay parents. Furthermore, people from lower socioeconomic environments often have more in common with one another than they do with those of similar racial or ethnic heritage from higher income levels (Strevy & Aldridge, 1994).

One source that is helpful in dispelling this myth is *Teaching With a Multicultural Perspective: A Practical Guide* (Davidman & Davidman, 1997). Sleeter and Grant (1993) also have written extensively about school goals for multicultural education. These include the promotion of "equal opportunity in the school, cultural pluralism, alternative life styles, and respect for those who differ and support for power equity among groups" (p. 171).

Gollnick and Chinn (1990) recommend five goals for multicultural education. These goals also emphasize issues beyond the boundaries of ethnic or racial issues. They include: 1) the promotion of strength and value of cultural diversity, 2) an emphasis on human rights and respect for those who are different from oneself, 3) the acceptance of alternative life choices for people, 4) the promotion of social justice and equality for all people, and 5) an emphasis on equal distribution of power and income among groups.

5. The tour and detour approaches are appropriate for teaching multicultural education. What is the tour approach and the detour approach? Louise Derman-Sparks (1993) uses the phrase "tourist-multiculturalism" to describe approaches that merely *visit* a culture. The tour approach to education involves a curriculum that is dictated primarily by months or seasons of the year. For example, some teachers believe an appropriate time to study Native Americans is November, when Thanksgiving occurs in the United States. Elementary teachers may *take a detour* during November and have children make Indian headbands or present a Thanksgiving play. Similarly, Black History Month often is the only time children study African American leaders or read literature written by Black authors. Maya Angelou once remarked that she will be glad when Black History Month is no longer necessary. When all Americans are sufficiently a part of our courses of study and daily instruction, there will be no need for Black History week or month.

These tour and detour methods *trivialize, patronize,* and *stereotype* cultures by emphasizing traditional costumes, foods, and dances while avoiding the true picture of the *everyday life of the people* from that culture (Derman-Sparks, 1993). Students often come away from such teaching with even more biases. Recently, white students in one district checked out of school during a

Black History Month program. Their parents indicated they felt that "This program was for them—not us."

6. Multicultural education should be taught as a separate subject. Just as touring and detouring are not recommended practices, neither is teaching multicultural education as a separate subject. In fact, this is just another detour. In a subtle way, it points out that many groups are still on the margin of society.

James Banks (1994) has divided multicultural curriculum reform into four approaches. These include: 1) the contributions approach, 2) the additive approach, 3) the social action approach, and 4) the transformation approach. This fourth approach is particularly powerful in addressing the myth of teaching multicultural education as a separate subject. In a transformation approach, the structure and basic assumptions of the curriculum are changed so that students can view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. History often is written from the winner's perspective, and so in traditional curricula students only get to hear the voice of the victor. In a transformation approach, "students are able to read and listen to voices of the victors and the vanquished" (p. 26).

Making multicultural education a separate topic would simply add something else to teachers' already full plates. We advocate an approach that promotes education that is multicultural overall. Multicultural concepts should be infused throughout the curriculum.

7. Multicultural education is an accepted part of the curriculum. In fact, this is far from true. There are current efforts to eliminate multicultural education from the schools. The popular media also has its staunch critics of multicultural education. On the back cover of Rush Limbaugh's (1994) popular book *See I Told You So* he says, "Multicultural education is just an excuse for those who have not made it in the American way." It is important to note, however, that there has never been one American culture, but many. Ross Perot used the term "melting pot" throughout his presidential campaigns. Perhaps a better way to look at the United States would be as a salad bowl (Aldridge, 1993). Unique, different cultures contribute to the whole country, just as a tomato or celery adds to the salad.

We advocate an approach that promotes education that is multicultural overall. Multicultural concepts should be infused throughout the curriculum.

8. Multiculturalism is divisive. According to this myth, immigrants coming to the United States eventually have been assimilated and considered themselves to be Americans. The myth goes on to state that when ethnicity is turned into a defining characteristic, it promotes division rather than unity. This shallow reasoning denies the multiple diversities that always have existed and continue to exist throughout the United States (Swiniarski, Breitborde, & Murphy, 1999).

9. In predominantly monocultural or bicultural societies, there is no need to study other cultures. This myth is pervasive in such societies. For example, we have heard from some undergraduate

education students who protest, "Why should we study other cultures when there are only Whites and Blacks in the class and in our community?" In the past two years, however, that same community has had an influx of Mexican and Asian families. Furthermore, the closest elementary school to the students who made this comment had 71 different nationalities represented. With an increasingly diverse society, bicultural and monocultural areas especially need to learn about cultures to which they will be in close proximity in the immediate future (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994).

10. Multicultural education should be reserved for older children who are less egocentric or ethnocentric. Lynch and Hanson (1998) tell us that "cultural understanding in one's first culture occurs early and is typically established by age 5" (p. 24). They go on to say, "children learn new cultural patterns more easily than adults" (p. 25). Young children are capable of learning that we are all alike and all different in certain ways. Children in the early elementary grades often study the family and community. Gathering pictures of each family and discussing the differences and similarities is a good place to start. Interestingly enough, the critics who suggest that multicultural education should be postponed are often the same ones who are interested in pushing academics down into the preschool curriculum.

11. When multicultural education is implemented, the commonality is lost (Swiniarski, Breitborde, & Murphy, 1999). As school curricula expand to incorporate more diverse cultures, conflicts may arise just as they did with the civil rights movement. However, multicultural education can assist society in being more tolerant, inclusive, and equitable, recognizing that the whole is rich with many contributing parts (see Ravitch, 1991/1992).

12. We do not need multicultural education because America already acknowledges its cultural diversity. Those who agree with this statement are quick to point out that Martin Luther King's birthday and Black History Month are widely celebrated. This is exactly what we mean by a tour or detour approach, which is often more divisive than transformative (see Derman-Sparks, 1989).

13. Historical accuracy suffers in multicultural education. Proponents of this statement have suggested that certain curricula promote that Cleopatra was Black and that Western Civilization started in Egypt rather than Greece. If students are taught appropriate skepticism at an early age, then they will develop questioning abilities to research discrepancies found in historical literature (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994).

14. Most people identify with only one culture. Increasingly, children and families are multiethnic in nature. Here are just two examples. Maria is an Evangelical Christian from Ecuador who married Mohammed, a Muslim from Pakistan. They have two elementary-age children who are being raised in Queens, New York. The children have never visited Ecuador or Pakistan. Patrick is of Chinese heritage, but was born in Jamaica. His family later moved to Toronto and now lives in Miami.

These children are not stereotypical. They have a unique cultural heritage. Multicultural education should examine intrapersonal cultural diversity as well as the interpersonal. If this is not acknowledged and valued, children like Patrick could experience intrapsychic cultural conflict.

15. Finally, there are not enough resources available about multicultural education. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, in the past 10 years, a plethora of sources have emerged concerning cultural diversity. We have found the references in this article to be very helpful. The list of multicultural Web sites provided at the end of this article are other valuable resources for elementary teachers.

There are, no doubt, many other misconceptions about multicultural education. These 15 represent those encountered in the authors' personal experiences. Although all three authors of this article come from different races and cultural backgrounds, we are sometimes surprised at our own lack of understanding and by some of our own misconceptions that we have constructed in the past. As have many teachers, we have participated

in some of these myths. However, we have a commitment to multicultural education and learning. As we continue to examine our own misconceptions about diversity, we hope you will make the effort to do the same.

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Multicultural Web sites

InSITE - Multicultural Education:	http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/
Multicultural Education Links:	http://www.lib.luc.edu/
Multicultural Education Abstracts:	http://www.carfax.co.uk/
Multicultural Education:	http://www.fau.edu/
MATC Student Life Multicultural Education Resources:	http://multicul.madison.tec.wi.us/
Center for Multilingual Multicultural Research:	http://www-rcf.usc.edu/
Multicultural Education:	http://www.library.unt.edu/

From the Vice President

raising reading expectations

As you may know, this past year I accepted a position as K-6 Coordinator of the Museum Magnet School, which is a partnership with the St. Paul School District and the Science Museum of Minnesota. The mission of the Museum Magnet School is to use the full resources of the museum to nurture creative thinkers who can work cooperatively to solve problems.

In addition to using this partnership in a variety of ways for all of our students, we are improving reading skills and creating a "culture of reading" among at-risk youngsters with two unique mentoring programs, both of which are proving very beneficial to all involved. Research shows that children who read often increase their vocabulary and become better writers and students. As educators, we know that good communication skills are critical to students' self-esteem, their success in school, and their future work opportunities.

Science Museum employees are currently volunteering time each week to meet with designated students to do paired reading and some writing, and to work on developmentally appropriate comprehension and vocabulary skills. Within this model, a designated student has four different tutors each week. The selected weekly tasks are coordinated and monitored by a staff person. With this intense academic engagement, the four tutors help one child to succeed at a time. These children look forward to their one-on-one experiences as they build relationships with positive, caring role models. The tutors equally enjoy the opportunity to share their knowledge and build an ongoing relationship with a young person.

Another excellent mentoring program at our school was started four years ago with University of Minnesota students. Twice weekly for an hour, about 50 preservice teachers work with children who are in need of reading tutoring. Known as the "Rise and Read" program, parents must arrange special transportation to get their children to school by 8:00 a.m. in order to take part in this unique one-on-one tutoring opportunity.

As a way of saying "thanks," the Science Museum of Minnesota offers volunteers exhibit and show passes, once the volunteers have tutored a certain number of hours. These two reading tutoring programs are excellent examples of community and school partnerships. For information on the Science Museum of Minnesota or the St. Paul School System, visit the Web sites at www.smm.org and www.spps.org, respectively. Learn about what children should know and be able to do in key knowledge areas, get some teaching ideas, and find additional Internet resources.

—Maria "M.J." Savaiano, Vice President
Representing Intermediate/Middle Childhood

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In the Gap: Bridging the Generation Through Literature and Learning Experiences

Patricia A. Crawford, University of Central Florida

"It was a flop—nothing but a flop."

These were the words a first-year teacher used to describe a lesson based on *Love You Forever*, Robert Munsch's (1986) well-known children's story that depicts the tender relationship between parent and child, while at the same time portraying the powerful emotions that often accompany the aging process. The emotional story tugs on more than a few heart strings as it follows a mother and her son across the years—until they reach the point at which the parent is quite elderly and the child is an adult. Suddenly, their caregiving roles are reversed. The love remains constant, yet the relationship has changed. The text invites readers to explore the ways in which our own lives and relationships are transformed through the aging process.

This particular teacher loved Munsch's book, and was sure her 2nd-grade class would thoroughly enjoy the read aloud, be moved by the storyline, and work enthusiastically on an extension project that celebrated the older adults in their lives. She never got past the read aloud, however. The children giggled at illustrations she considered poignant. They described the characters' actions, which she found touching, as "silly" and "make believe." "Worst of all," the teacher reported, "they just didn't get it. They didn't understand that the story was about love between generations. It didn't make them sad. They didn't even like the old lady. The whole lesson was a flop."

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The teacher's experience raises several important questions. The first group concerns aging itself. What do children need to know about the aging process? What is the best way to facilitate this learning? How can educators help students develop informed perspectives and respond sensitively to the issue of what it means to grow old? The second group of questions concerns the audience of children's books that address aging and other sensitive issues. Are these texts really written for children, or are they intended primarily for adult enjoyment? Is it reasonable to expect children's responses to these stories to be similar to those of more mature readers? Finally, curricular questions need to be addressed. Should a lesson be considered a failure simply because students respond differently than anticipated? How can lessons such as these be transformed into valuable learning experiences?

Research indicates that even young children tend to exhibit an anti-aging bias. Children at the preschool and elementary levels frequently associate negative characteristics with older adults, and they often state that they do not want to grow old themselves.

Coming of Age

It is no surprise that America is graying (Blunk & Williams, 1997; Pipher, 1999; Smith & Newman, 1993). Demographics indicate that the number of Americans over the age of 65 has doubled over the past 40 years, and projections indicate that this figure will double again in the 40 years to come (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). Also, during the past 25 years, the number of people over the age of 85 expanded at six times the rate of the general population growth of the United States, and centenarians (those citizens aged 100 years or more) are now one of the fastest-growing segments of the population (Carter, 1998). These startling figures provide good news for a society in which, only a century ago, the average life span was merely 46 years. It seems clear that the U.S. population has come of age. Therefore, it is essential that children develop a good understanding of the aging process, and that they have an informed perspective of what it means to be an older adult.

Beyond such facts and figures, there are important reasons for addressing age-related issues in the elementary school. First and foremost, aging is something that promises to affect children's lives in a personal and significant way. Young children interact with grandparents and with other older relatives, neighbors, and friends. They will witness their parents' aging process and will one day grow old themselves. Aging is a natural part of the human life cycle, one that brings both rewards and challenges. Therefore, it is important for children to have a balanced and informed perspective that allows them to sort through myths and stereotypes and develop positive self-concepts and participate fully in healthy, enriching, and joyful cross-generational relationships.

Finally, research indicates that even young children tend to exhibit an anti-aging bias. That is, children at the preschool and elementary levels frequently associate negative characteristics with older adults, and they often state that they do not want to grow old themselves (Blunk & Williams, 1997; Seefeldt, Warman, Jantz, & Galper, 1990). These children are exhibiting

the first signs of ageism, a belief that people "cease to be people, cease to be the same people, or become people of a distinct and inferior kind, by virtue of having lived a specific number of years" (Comfort, 1976, p. 35). Ageism is the systematic stereotyping of older adults, a form of prejudice not unlike that of racism or sexism (Carter, 1998). Ageist perspectives affect both the elderly and those who stereotype them. Therefore, it is essential that teachers take an anti-bias approach and address age-related issues in lessons, literature, and learning experiences.

Into the Classroom

Teachers can interrupt the cycle of age-related bias by creating a classroom atmosphere that is inclusive and supportive of all people, including older adults. To this end, classroom bulletin boards and displays should include representations of diverse groups of people (Derman-Sparks & ABC Task Force, 1989). These collections should include images of older adults from a variety of cultural backgrounds, showing them actively involved in a full range of activities. Although it is fine to include traditional images (e.g., grandmothers who bake, grandfathers who fish), these displays also should include representations of adults engaged in experiences that challenge stereotypical notions (older adults gainfully employed, serving in the community, engaged in the arts, participating in athletic activities, etc.).

Teachers also can help elementary students develop accurate and informed perspectives of the aging process by inviting them to explore and celebrate the lives of older adults. On a broad level, students can study people who have made significant contributions in their later years. On a local level, students can examine newspapers and accounts of local events to identify older adults who are actively involved in their communities, and who are making a difference. Finally, on a personal level, students can celebrate the older people in their own lives. They can bring in pictures of older relatives, neighbors, and family friends. Social studies, literacy, and art concepts can be integrated in the curriculum, as students interview these people, document oral histories, write biographical pieces, and publish information related to their learning.

Beyond the Walls

Intergenerational studies provide a wonderful opportunity to extend learning beyond the classroom walls. Older community members can help bridge the gap between school and community by tutoring, making presentations that highlight their areas of expertise, and working alongside young friends in community service projects. Likewise, elementary students can venture beyond the classroom by establishing ongoing relationships with seniors. This can be done by way of pen pal or key pal (E-mail) relationships, or by establishing face-to-face friendships with older adults at local senior citizen centers or care facilities. This personal contact between young and old has the potential to benefit both groups by debunking stereotypes, nurturing intergenerational relationships, and facilitating participation in mutually beneficial relationships (Dallman & Power, 1997; Frego, 1995; Smith & Newman, 1993).

Students who participate in these types of activities will gain firsthand experience in interacting with older adults who have varied backgrounds, abilities, and interests. They also stand to develop more accurate and less biased perceptions about the nature of the aging process, as well as a better understanding of the complexities associated with being older. To aid students and older participants in forging these relationships, teachers must help facilitate a positive, nurturing, and educational learning experience by clearly communicating the goals of the project, developing a realistic set of expectations for all participants, connecting the experience with other curricular areas, and providing ongoing support throughout the experience.

Between the Pages

Literature provides a wonderful means for exploring notions related to age. As children interface with older characters, they have an opportunity to "meet" a host of seniors and to examine the workings of intergenerational relationships (see Figure 1). Unfortunately, research indicates that a significant amount of age-related bias exists in the pages of children's books, often in the form of underrepresentation of older adults (Allmerico & Fillmer, 1989; Ansello, 1978). Moreover, when older characters are present, they often are de-

picted as sedentary people who have few outside interests; these characters are represented, both visually and textually, in very stereotypical roles, wearing only traditional clothing and rarely engaging in activities beyond those associated with grandparenting (Ansello, 1978; Crawford, 1996; McElhoe, 1999; McGuire, 1993). Therefore, it is essential that teachers take care when choosing books for read alouds and classroom use, striving to provide broadly representative examples of older adults.

Teachers also may wish to use children's books as points of cultural critique—springboards from which children can examine representations of older people in text. Even young children can be encouraged to ask thoughtful questions about the ways that certain groups are represented in books, and to explore the ways in which these representations both come from and support prevailing societal attitudes. Thus, even texts that are stereotypical, or that include negative representations of seniors, can be used to explore the basis of bias and to teach important concepts related to ageism.

Flipping the Flop

Was the teacher's lesson described at the beginning of this article really a flop? If so, did it have to be? More than likely the children's responses to *Love You Forever* were symptomatic of their limited understanding of the very complex issues contained within the pages of the text. Understanding the ongoing cycle of human growth and development, the challenges of aging, and the joy of nurturing loving intergenerational relationships requires a degree of maturity and sophistication. Thus, it is not surprising that the children were not immediately as empathic as the teacher expected them to be. On the other hand, the children's lack of response also represented a window of opportunity, one through which the teacher might glimpse her students' current understandings and then accordingly make plans to help them extend their learning, interact with sensitive texts in more appropriate ways, and ultimately develop accurate, positive, and healthy concepts about the aging process. In short, a negative response from the students is more of an opportunity for instruction than an obstacle to learning; it is a directive that helps point the way to areas in which the children would benefit from extended learning and new experiences related to these sensitive and important topics. As teachers, we have the chance to help students deal with important life lessons, and to flip "flop" lessons into powerful learning experiences.

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Learning Through Literature: Children's Books That Confront Ageist Stereotypes

Arkin, A. (1995). *Some fine grandpa!* New York: HarperCollins. Grandpa has some wild stories to tell when he comes to live with Molly and her family. Can they possibly be true? This humorous picture book raises subtle questions about the assumptions that often surround seniors.

Babbitt, N. (1975). *Tuck everlasting.* New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. In this classic, Newbery award-winning book, the protagonists partake of a fountain of youth and face the prospect and horror of not ever experiencing the aging process.

Bauer, M. D. (1995). *When I go camping with Grandma.* New York: Bridgewater. In this multigenerational celebration of life in the great outdoors, Grandma is portrayed as an active, capable, and competent companion.

Bawden, N. (1996). *Granny the pag.* New York: Clarion. This young adult novel features an older protagonist, who shatters the stereotype of the typical elderly woman. The grandmother is a bit rough and eccentric, while at the same time being gentle and nurturing. When her granddaughter's well-being is at stake, Granny rises to the occasion and demonstrates grace, dignity, and wisdom in the face of adversity.

Bunting, E. (1989). *The Wednesday surprise.* New York: Clarion. In this lovely intergenerational story, Anna and her grandmother work together on a special birthday project, one that is sure to be the best surprise of all. The book demonstrates the power of a reciprocal relationship between young and old, one in which all participants contribute and benefit.

Bunting, E. (1994). *Sunshine home.* New York: Clarion. In this beautifully crafted picture book, three generations deal with a grandmother's entrance into a nursing home. Bunting's moving text shows the complexities and challenges sometimes experienced by older adults and their families.

Gaffney, T. (1996). *Grandpa takes me to the moon.* Illustrated by Barry Root. New York: Tambourine. A former astronaut recounts, for his young grandson, his memories of going to the moon. Both an informational text and gentle bedtime story, this book honors the wealth of experience to which older adults can lay claim.

Lowry, L. (1993). *The giver.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin. This haunting young adult novel depicts life in a futuristic world. It poses questions about the treatment of the elderly and others who may not appear "useful" to modern society.

Say, A. (1995). *Stranger in the mirror.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Sam goes to bed a happy little boy, but awakes to find that he has aged into an old man. Although he looks old on the outside, he recognizes that he is still the same youthful person on the inside. Will others recognize this truth too? This provocative text challenges many age-related biases and assumptions.

Shaw, E. (1996). *Grandmother's alphabet.* Duluth, MN: Pfeifer-Hamilton. This inspiring concept book shows that grandmothers should not be stereotyped, but that they can live out any number of fascinating roles.

Strangis, J. (1993). *Grandfather's rock.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Told in the style of a traditional folktale, this story reminds readers that each one of us will one day be old. The author invites readers to consider society's treatment of older members in light of the golden rule (i.e., to think of how we ourselves would like to be treated as we age).

Yolen, J. (1997). *Miz Berlin walks.* New York: Philomel. This tender, yet powerful, picture book describes a very special intergenerational friendship, and shows the impact this type of relationship can have over the course of a lifetime.

Figure 1

Making the Connection: Internet Resources That Address Age-Related Issues

U.S. Census Bureau: http://www.census.gov/
This Web site provides a host of information related to many aspects of American society. It also includes current demographic information related to older adults.

Intergenerational Connections: http://www.nnfr.org/igen/
This site includes information for those interested in community-based intergenerational programs. The links provide access to a wealth of intergenerational resources including children's books, articles, position statements, videos, and study programs.

International Center for Education About Aging: http://www.iceaa.org/
The stated mission of this institute includes educating primary and secondary students about the aging process, to help them to better appreciate older adults. The site includes a variety of resources to this end.

Generations Together: http://www.pitt.edu/~gti/
These are the home pages of an international center for intergenerational studies, housed at the University of Pittsburgh. The site includes a solid overview of intergenerational programming, as well as some very helpful resources.

The Gerontological Society of America: http://www.geron.org/
This site has access to background information related to the study of aging and to the Gerontological Society.

Elderhostel Intergenerational: http://www.elderhostel.org/pubrel/igenfac.htm
These pages describe a variety of opportunities for older adults to partner with young relatives and friends, as part of the Elderhostel program. Possibilities include many different forms of hands-on activities, class work, and field trips.

United Generations Ontario: http://www.intergenugo.org/
In addition to program information, this site provides very helpful background information about intergenerational programming. There are many excellent resources here for both students and seniors.

American Association of Retired Persons: http://www.aarp.org/
This is the site of the nation's largest association for people over 50. Their Web page includes links to a wide variety of information related to advocacy for seniors.

Figure 2

From the Vice President

museum exhibits: a model for student engagement

What would you imagine a museum school to be like? Do you envision a classroom filled with mounted animals and collections of shells and leaves? Do you envision students going to a local museum with notebooks in hand, ready to draw and collect data? The term "museum school" is unfamiliar to many people. While museum and school partnerships are proliferating, museum schools represent an intense level of commitment that relatively few museums have yet to undertake.

The Museum Magnet School in St. Paul, Minnesota, houses 385 children from kindergarten through 6th grade. The atrium is the focal point of the school, where visitors will find a variety of artifacts and specimens from the Science Museum's teaching and loan collections, including mounted bears and hawks, full-sized replicas of Mayan stone sculptures, a hang glider, and trees bent by the force of hurricane winds. The children's exhibits are also on display in the atrium, in the specially designed school Exhibit Hall, in hallway vitrines, and in classroom exhibit cases. These student-designed exhibits form the heart of the museum school. We are creating a museum by kids, for kids. It is a collaborative venture involving students, teachers, museum staff, parents, and community resource people.

Museum Magnet School students from all grades work together on one or two major thematic exhibits each year. One is based on residencies at the Science Museum, focusing on a particular gallery. The other is an all-school event. The January all-school exhibit, Ball Olympics, was a festive event and well attended by families, St. Paul Schools Superintendent Patricia Harvey, other school district personnel, and Science Museum of Minnesota staff. The project illustrated the museum process of exploring, experimenting, explaining, and exhibiting. The school staff met to brainstorm possible ways to integrate that process into the Ball Olympics theme. Two core classes for each grade, taught by artist in residence Jan Elftmann and me, helped provide a foundation for the children. They explored this topic by observing bouncing and rolling balls on a variety of surfaces, taking and recording data on graphs, and sharing this information with others. Museum Magnet students began to understand, and even question, the physics of what they observed.

After a winter recess homework activity to design a roller coaster track using a hand-made clay ball and poster paper, students were ready to work in small groups to create various events for their favorite balls. Grades 3-6 created various collaborative Ball Olympics events. Second-graders displayed a variety of balls, some of them cut in two, in the atrium area. All of the students had an opportunity to look at the displays and try the events. The students learned by creating a hands-on activity and shared the information and knowledge they gained. Students created their own criteria for an interesting exhibit:

- Could be shared with others
- Had pictures showing people making the exhibit
- Had students explaining and sharing ideas
- Was colorful and interactive
- Had something short to read with big titles and details about the exhibit
- Helped you to discover how things worked
- Had enough new information so that you were not bored
- Was fun and gave you new ideas to do at home.

These attributes of a quality exhibit demonstrate what the students learned through using the museum process. The museum process bridges the gap between formal and informal learning by giving children an opportunity to apply academic skills to authentic challenges, projects, collections, demonstrations, and performances that communicate ideas to others.

Museums, dedicated to the concept of lifelong learning, are in an excellent position to help schools develop these kinds of authentic, real-world challenges for students. Perhaps your school will choose to form a partnership with a local museum.

This is my last article as Vice President. I am honored to have served ACEI in this capacity. I congratulate Jeanie Burnett on being elected as our new Vice President for Intermediate/Middle Childhood. I invite you to consider becoming involved in ACEI committee work. I know you will enjoy it.

—M. J. Savaiano, Vice President, Representing Intermediate/Middle Childhood

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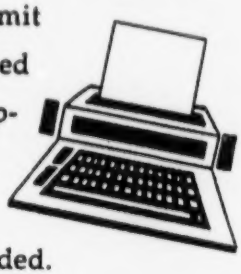
Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Elementary* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the education and development of children ages 7 to 10. Editorial assistance is available if needed.



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